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PROCEEDINGS

INSTITUTE

ON

MEETING THE SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL NEEDS  
OF VISUALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN AND YOUTH

MISSOURI SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND  
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

May 12, 1973

COMMUNITY SERVICES DIVISION

REGION III

AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR THE BLIND, INC.  
15 WEST 16TH STREET  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10011

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PLANNING COMMITTEE

All of St. Louis or St. Louis County, Missouri

Diane Bridges  
Girl Scout Council of Greater St. Louis

Joe Carenza  
Catholic Youth Council

Olive Chase  
Special School District of St. Louis County

Jackie Chinn  
Mayor's Council on Youth

Irving C. Clay  
Recreation, Parks & Forestry Department

Martin E. Graham  
Boy Scouts of America

Don Hanna  
YMCA South Side Branch

Donald W. Johnson  
Missouri School for the Blind

Elizabeth Kirn  
Missouri School for the Blind

Sondra Larson  
Work Experience Center  
Jewish Employment & Vocational Service

Robert D. Leighninger, Sr.  
St. Louis Society for the Blind

M. Merrins  
American Youth Hostels

Reverend Robert Rastberger  
Catholic Youth Council

Rhea Ruble  
Camp Fire Girls

Ruth Ann Sandstedt  
Health & Welfare Council  
of Metropolitan St. Louis

Randy Stinebaker  
St. Louis Society for the Blind

Doris Threlkeld  
Bureau for the Blind

Boyd Wietecter  
Department of Parks & Recreation

Carl P. Wood  
Herbert Hoover Boys' Club



PARTICIPANTS IN DEMONSTRATIONS OF RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES  
INCLUDING FACULTY AND STUDENTS  
FROM THE MISSOURI SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

---

GROUP I

1. Roller Skating      Mrs. Marie Colwell  
    &  
    Trampoline      Marleen Gray  
                         Nelle Denney  
                         Norma McMillen  
                         Michele Hauser
2. Swimming      Mary Schmidt  
  
                         Chris Strubberg  
                         Mark Kueber  
                         John Eisenhart
3. Scuba      Bill Bridwell & Scott Archer  
  
                         Doug Ashby  
                         Melody Jacobs  
                         Dan Keller
4. Bowling      Barb Bantle  
  
                         Mike Nooner  
                         Marc Brayton  
                         Jerry Jegel

GROUP II

1. Cooking      Mrs. Pamela Webb  
  
                         Pat Jaycox  
                         Debbie Sutton  
                         Teresa Myers  
                         Julie Backer
2. Games      Cards      Dominoes  
  
                         Philip Wilson and      Bob Diebold  
                         Deangele Collier      Debbie Fitzpatrick  
                         Ronnie Lemons  
                         Joe Morgan
3. Combo      Harold Walton  
  
                         Terry Smith  
                         Wayne Layton  
                         Phil Hamilton  
                         Marcia Wallace

GROUP III

1. Arts & Crafts Donald Charpiot  
Richard Hiemer
2. Archery Bob Barton  
Regina Oak  
Mark Dewberry  
Rodger McCoy
3. Bicycling George Lantz  
Anna Silvers  
Debbie Parrett  
Michelle Vespar

GROUP IV

Scouting Keith McQueen, Scoutmaster  
Andy Difani, Ass't Scoutmaster

Boy Scouts

Wayne Shaw  
Robert Ford  
Ricky Davila  
Larry Akins  
Chris Holt  
George Morris

Scouting Arve Jane Tanner, Scout Leader

Girl Scouts

Laura Lauritzen  
Wendy Parker  
Kristi Forrest  
Donna Barry  
Debbie Jenkins

## PREFACE

The Proceedings of the Institute on Meeting the Social and Recreational Needs of Visually Handicapped Children and Youth "tell it as it was," informally and sometimes with humor. The text has been transcribed and edited from a cassette tape recording and brings to the reader the real flavor of this meeting.

The Planning Committee was representative of the youth recreation agencies in the St. Louis area and it was their request to involve informed local persons as speakers and resource persons.

CBS Channel 4 Television filmed a considerable number of feet of tape of the demonstrations of the sports and recreational activities which were shown with commentary by a newscaster on the 6:00 and 10:00 P.M. Channel 4 newscast, May 12, 1973. As a follow-up on the Institute, the St. Louis Society for the Blind is preparing a video tape which can be dubbed in with the film and together they may be used for information and public education, as well as in staff training programs in local agencies.

The American Foundation for the Blind expresses its appreciation in particular to Donald W. Johnson, Superintendent of the Missouri School for the Blind and to members of the School's administrative and teaching staff for their cooperation in this endeavor.

To Miss Olive Chase and Mrs. Virginia Barnett, special thanks is in order for their help with the luncheon. It was the students from the Missouri School for the Blind who participated in the demonstration of sports and recreational activities, who made the Institute of great interest because their performance made all that we had talked about from the platform come alive.





P R O G R A M

9:00 - 9:30 A.M. REGISTRATION

9:30 - 10:15 A.M. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Jessamine Cobb, Regional Consultant  
American Foundation for the Blind  
Chicago, Illinois

THE OPEN MIND  
Ernie McMillan  
President, PROUD INC., Offensive Tackle  
St. Louis Cardinals Team

WHAT BLINDNESS IS ALL ABOUT  
Robert Leighninger, Sr., Executive Director  
St. Louis Society for the Blind

Film: "WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU SEE A BLIND PERSON?"

10:15 A.M. DISPELLING MISCONCEPTIONS

Speakers:

Lucy Fairbank, Assistant Professor  
Child Development, Kennedy-King College  
Chicago, Illinois

11:00 - 11:15 A.M. BREAK

11:15 A.M.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AS A PART OF RECREATION PROGRAM  
Parts I and II

Mrs. Elizabeth C. Kirn, Acting Principal  
Missouri School for the Blind  
St. Louis, Missouri

Alfred Eberhardt, Head of Physical  
Education for Boys  
Missouri School for the Blind  
St. Louis, Missouri

12:00 Noon

YOUTH PANEL

Randy Stinebaker,  
St. Louis Society for the Blind

Barbara Stear, Senior  
Brentwood High School  
St. Louis, Mo.

Sheri Stinebaker, Senior  
Brentwood High School  
St. Louis County

12:30 P.M.

BOX LUNCH

1:15 P.M.

OBSERVING BLIND YOUTH AT PLAY

Group I Roller skating, swimming,  
bowling

Group II Cooking, Games - cards,  
dominoes, etc.

Group III Arts & Crafts

Group IV Archery, bicycling

Group V Scouting: Boys, Brownies,  
Juniors

Group VI Music Combo



2:30 P.M.

"LET'S FIND THE KIDS"

Presentation by Robert Leighninger, Sr.  
St. Louis Society for the Blind

3:00 - 4:00 P.M.

FILM THEATER (Optional)

American Foundation for the Blind films:

"SOME OF OUR SCHOOLMATES ARE BLIND"

"TOWARD TOMORROW"



INTRODUCTION

Jessamine Cobb, ACSW  
Regional Consultant

Welcome to the American Foundation for the Blind Regional Institute on "Meeting the Social and Recreational Needs of Visually Handicapped Children and Youth". The idea of a conference on this subject grew out of the Foundation's observation that youth recreation agencies serving the general community are usually not responsive to the needs of blind and visually handicapped boys and girls.

Over a number of years representatives of national youth agencies and of agencies working with the blind, have met to discuss the advantages and benefits to be gained by the joint participation of blind and sighted youth in social and recreational activities in their local communities. A national workshop in Atlanta in March 1972 was the outgrowth of these discussions.

This meeting in Atlanta emphasized and promoted the social and recreational similarities of youth and the need for agencies to provide for equal developmental opportunities for all youth, with the option for them to choose either integrated or segregated activities. Both visually handicapped and sighted youth were participants in the day's program, in a panel discussion, in demonstrations and in the group discussions. Representatives of local school systems, libraries, parks and recreation programs, youth serving agencies and persons providing specialized services for the visually handicapped participated and shared information.

Today this national workshop is serving as the prototype for a series of regional meetings, of which this institute is a part. The goal is to demonstrate that blind and visually handicapped youth can participate and compete with sighted peers in recreational activities and to open opportunities for this kind of participation in the St. Louis area.



INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER: ERNIE MC MILLAN

By Robert D. Leighninger, Sr.  
Executive Director  
St. Louis Society for the Blind

What do you think of when you think of blindness? Are you immediately filled with compassion? Do you think of blindness as being retribution for sin, or do you have a different concept? Throughout life there are many myths and stereotypes that confront us and when we meet a person who is different than we are, human nature being what it is may make us shy away from this person. The world is made up of many different kinds of people; some of them happen to be visually handicapped. I am zeroing in on the concept that when we encounter any person who is different, we should consider that person first as an individual in his own right. In effect, I am asking you to have an "open mind" about all people no matter what their differences may be.

Ernie McMillan, our first speaker, explodes a number of stereotypes and myths. One is that men who are professional football tackles are big gorillas - all brawn and no brain. Off the football field, Ernie McMillan is the president of Proud, Inc., a national magazine directed to help young Black people to gain a sense of personal dignity and to change stereotypes and myths. Another myth is that well-paid sports professionals are interested only in the almighty buck: to the contrary, Ernie is using personal funds to help support Proud Magazine.

In introducing Ernie, it is like introducing Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. On the football field, he's a big, rough, tough offensive tackle for the St. Louis Cardinals. He's "all-pro" and his team and the fans have great respect for him. Off the field he's an entirely different personality - he's Mr. Nice Guy, and it gives me pleasure to be able to introduce him to you.

Ernie - you've got the ball.

THE OPEN MIND

Ernie McMillan  
President of Proud, Inc. and  
Offensive Tackle, St. Louis Cardinals Team

I want to share with you my feelings about the handicapped. There has been a series on Channel 4 TV about housing which is under construction without consideration for about one-sixth of the population in this country, namely those who are handicapped. In effect, handicapped persons are not able to benefit or to participate as residents or tenants in the majority of new housing which is being built because some adaptations may be needed to fit their special needs. If we automatically shut people out because of a handicap, this is not having an Open Mind.

Proud Magazine has a TV show and last week we had as a guest on the program a young lady who is deaf and dumb. One of the things she missed in her life was the opportunity to attend a regular high school. Well, why didn't she have the opportunity? Today this young lady is a talented person who wants to be a fashion designer, but because of her handicap people have been closing their minds and not giving her the opportunity to use her special talents and skills.

This year the St. Louis Cardinals Football team drafted a young rookie who is deaf. Questions were immediately asked about how could he get the signals and what adaptations would need to be made by all the other players out on the football field? One of the things I have learned in athletics is that when a man steps out on the football field he can do the job that is expected of him if he has the guts to do it. The other players soon treated this deaf player just as they would a person who didn't have a handicap and they expected the same excellence from him in performance as from the other players. The only difference was that his teammates learned to communicate the signals by the touch system.

A couple of years ago I was a member of the Mayor's Committee "For the Challenge of the 70s" in St. Louis and served on a sub-committee on recreation. Near the end of the numerous committee meetings, somebody made the statement that we are forgetting about involving two



large groups of people in recreation programs, namely the aged and the handicapped. The Committee expressed fear about serving the handicapped because they didn't know how they could be accommodated "safely" without a lot of adjustments in facilities and program activities which would cost money. We have a job to do of convincing people in the field of recreation that this doesn't take lots of money or special equipment or accommodations to include the handicapped in on-going programs and activities.

People seem to be more concerned about street lighting and garbage collection than about recreation because the provision for facilities and programs in this field of activity is not an emotional issue. But it is an issue which is just as vital to the welfare of the total community as the provision of basic city services. Without a place to develop one's body, it is hard to develop one's mind. With the coming of new leisure time and shorter work weeks, all people need opportunities for recreation more than ever to live a wholesome and happy life.

If something is not a pressing problem, people have a tendency to push it aside and this is what is happening to opening equal opportunities for recreation for the handicapped. People who have grown up with or come to know handicapped persons, recognize that their wants and their desires are just the same as those of all other persons. The handicapped have talents which are not being used to the maximum because the doors to equal opportunity are closed to them. When people have the opportunity to live and work with persons who are different than they are, they learn to cope with each other's differences, and sharing equal opportunities is not a big deal. So you can see I am 100% behind the purpose of this meeting to integrate blind and visually handicapped youth with sighted peers in community recreational activities.



WHAT IS BLINDNESS ALL ABOUT

Robert D. Leighninger, Sr.  
Executive Director  
St. Louis Society for the Blind

Dispelling myths, searching for the open mind, and preparing to do a selling job with total community involvement to open the doors of opportunity for handicapped persons is what we have been talking about this morning.

I think most of you saw the television series "Longstreet". There were a number of good things about that series and some bad. One of the bad things was the presentation of Longstreet as a super-star. Let's face the facts: 80% of all blindness results from degenerative diseases, the results of which may not only cause blindness but also other handicapping conditions. People with multiple handicaps obviously cannot be "Longstreets" - they cannot be super-stars. In any segment of the community which has special identifying characteristics which set them apart as separate or different, some people are brilliant and some are stupid and there are a lot of average people. So we're not trying to "snow the troops". We are not trying to say that every handicapped person has the ability to become a "pro" - like Ernie. By the same token, most people with a handicap do not need a "one-arm nursemaid" situation.

You will observe this afternoon a number of young persons whose handicap is blindness. They will participate in a series of demonstrations which will convince you that their ability to perform is on a par with the performance of sighted counterparts.

I am the adviser of Scout Troop whose specialty is Indian dancing. We decided it would be fun for us to come to the Missouri School for the Blind and put on our program for the Scout Post at the school. We brought the blind Scouts into the dressing room and as we got into our Indian costumes we let them "see" by feel what we were putting on. After our performance of Indian dances they said to us, "Look, we've had a good time, how about you guys coming back and bowling with us sometime?" And our guys' reaction was -- "Huh, bowl with blind kids?" "What fun is that going to be?" They decided to be good sports

and we came back to bowl. Some of the blind boys beat the socks off the sighted boys, and they found out that blind youth are all just like other people with the exception that in an activity like bowling a special rail accommodates for the lack of vision.

We were invited to come back and skate and our guys said, "Awh, skating? We gave that up when we were little kids." On the way to the car I said, "Look, you guys were wrong about bowling so why not make a try at skating?" "Well, if you say so", was the reply. A few weeks later we returned and we strapped on the shoe-skates. We didn't know what we were getting into but we started circling around in the gym. We didn't see what we expected to see, namely the blind kids banging into the wall because they had orientated themselves to the location of the music which was coming out of the speakers in the four corners of the gym. The blind kids weren't falling on their duffs, like some of us were. One of them got a basket ball and then another got a basket ball and they said, "Hey, let's play a game". "What kind of game do you play on roller skates with a basket ball?" we asked. "We'll show you." And as we skated around in a circle, all of a sudden our feet got knocked out from under us because they slammed that basket ball at our feet and bowled us over like ten-pins. Well, we immediately accepted the challenge and thought that we had a big, fat advantage, because we have eyes and we can see. We took our turn and tried to knock them over, but do you know what? We threw the ball at the skates but by the time the ball hit, they were 10 feet beyond where we had aimed.

What we had learned was that when we get right down to the nuts and bolts of it, the biggest obstacle to the handicapped person is not their own handicap, but the blindness of ourselves, the sighted public. For example, we had a preconceived notion that blindness would be a tremendous stumbling block to having fun together. It is indeed a major handicap, but we learned that there are ways of compensating for lack of clear vision, and that our new blind friends can compete on a par and even beat us even though we had thought we had the advantage because of our ability to see.



AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR THE BLIND FILM

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU SEE A BLIND PERSON?

Introduction by Jessamine Cobb

This film deals lightly with a serious problem and was designed to aid sighted people in resolving problems that may arise for them when they meet blind persons. It depicts a sighted person's misconceptions of blind people and supplies some guidelines on how a sighted person can achieve a mutually satisfying relationship with a blind person by applying common sense in walking, talking and dining with a blind person.

The film is available for the modest rental of \$7.50 per screening, or may be purchased for \$75.00. All requests and inquiries should be directed to the Foundation's Public Education Division in New York City.



## DISPELLING MISCONCEPTIONS

Lucy F. Fairbank  
Assistant Professor - Child Development  
Kennedy-King College  
Chicago, Illinois

We are speaking today of young people who are developing gradually into adults. Thus we are concerned not only with what is happening now but with what we hope for them at maturity. A truly mature adult, says Stone and Church, "retains the basic emotional strengths of infancy, the autonomy of toddlerhood; the capacity for wonder and pleasure and playfulness of preschool years; the capacity for affiliation and intellectual curiosity of the school years and the idealism and passion of adolescence".<sup>1)</sup>

To put it another way, a mature adult in our culture is capable of adjusting to change, able to chart his own course, has realism, wisdom and humor, feels comfortable about himself and with other people, holds to democratic values and attitudes, and realizes that death is a reality for all of us. Can we ask less than this for our blind children and youth? Then how can we best assist them on the road to this kind of maturity?

It is true that some blind children and youth are multiply disabled, physically and/or mentally, but let us today consider young people whose primary disability is blindness. We have four big tasks. Each can be related to recreational experiences.

First, notice that I speak of "disability", not "handicap". Among people in rehabilitation these days a sharp distinction is being made between these two terms. Anyone may have a disability: blindness, illness, deafness, retardation, etc. But a disability becomes a handicap only if the disabled person loses hope, is overly dependent and indulges in self pity. So our first goal is to prevent a handicap by treating blind children like other children, with an extra thrust toward emotional independence, as well as physical mobility, so to compensate for times when assistance is needed.

Participation in recreation of the child's choice can satisfy and increase feelings of self worth and offers many opportunities for joy from achievement and independence.

Attitudes toward the acceptance or non-acceptance of blind children can be changed. We know that pity and over-protectiveness denote non-acceptance of these children. The strong inner fears and angers which promote this behavior on the part of families, friends or the public, can often be dealt with in discussions after observing blind children playing. At the start most observers become aware of the skills and assets of the blind child. Then they may be helped to notice that problems he may have are less related to his physical disability than to his feelings of self worth. At this point it should be possible to discuss the feelings of the adults about the blind child or about blindness generally, so that they will act in such a way as to prevent a handicap from developing in the blind child.

Our second task is to see that blind children have sighted playmates and are comfortable with peers who can see as well as those who cannot. This is important because we want the blind child to have sufficient experience with sighted friends so that as an adult he can choose how much of his work, leisure and family life should be spent in the general community and how much in the often restricted, sheltered environment of blind people.

During play, friendships develop and children learn interpersonal skills and attitudes. But blind children and sighted children must be truly involved in the give and take of childhood relationships and not just observe each other at occasional events. Chronological age of friends may be less important than social maturity, for the children must be able to play, argue, make up and argue again! In such a setting, they will all begin to realize that blindness can be less handicapping than extreme shyness, or insensitivity, or mistrustfulness, or the desire to hurt others.

However, it is hard to make arrangements for play together, particularly if blind children attend special schools. Adults must believe ardently in the value of integrated play or such programs will not exist. Patient one-to-one education of parents, community recreation leaders and sighted children is usually needed. The reward for everyone involved will be to enjoy and appreciate people behind their surface differences.



Our third task involves realization that the blind child, like his sighted age-mates, needs a wide variety of recreational programs to give him a breadth of experience on which to base later preferences; to enable him to share in the cultural traditions of his age group, and most important to aid his growth toward social and emotional maturity.

Childhood is a time when children value mastering skills and when their interests should be very broad indeed. Adults need to exercise quite a bit of ingenuity, however, to assure blind children of all the variety that is possible for them in recreation. For instance, in order for Billy to swim at the YMCA with others his age, someone must usually persuade the YMCA that this is feasible. Many community recreation people prefer to segregate disabled children. Is this really for safety or does it represent society's need to categorize?

Yet the possibilities for program variety are virtually endless: crafts, art, music, drama, scouting, parties, committees, projects, games, sports ... of course, some special adaptation may be needed. For instance, in skiing someone must provide auditory cues as guidance. Special or modified equipment, like braille playing cards allows sighted and blind youngsters to participate together. In addition, extra time may be needed for the blind youngster to acquire a variety of skills which will bring him into contact with sighted children. Many activities he can learn alongside of sighted children. In some situations he might need special instruction or coaching, or in a few cases to participate only in a special role.

Our final task is to see that children can learn about their world through interpersonal experiences, and recreation can provide many opportunities for being with people and coping with situations and feelings. Unfortunately, blind children may spend too much time alone or before TV sets, or in audience groups or formal classes. This deficit they share with most children in our present day culture!

Adults must not dominate the recreation of children, but we do have important responsibilities for seeing that all have chances to participate actively in recreation appropriate to their social and emotional maturity. This should include many opportunities for success and for shared fun and laughter. Adults are responsible for introducing children to social games, to informal dramatics and to



projects where competition is appropriate to children's needs, not to adult standards. Rules and organization should exist solely to make play more satisfying, and each person should share in responsibility for making the whole a success.

Adults should become resource people and counselors as children mature, encouraging each to develop and assume leadership skills. Because of the tendency to over-protect blind children, when children suffer from the results of this, it may be necessary for them to play at first with other blind children under skilled adult leadership. Chances for socially mature roles should be available. Starting at the level where the child is, he should be offered choices and the opportunity to take and share responsibility. This is especially possible in recreation programs and is effective only where the play spirit prevails.

In summary, let us all unite on these four tasks: preventing handicaps; giving blind children opportunities for real friends among sighted children; providing a wide variety of program, and seeing that there is a progression of interpersonal experiences available. These should be a part of all children's recreation, but are especially needed and often neglected for blind youngsters.

#### References:

- 1) p.499 - Stone, L. Joseph, and Church, Joseph

Childhood and Adolescence, Random House, New York, 1973.  
Also see the films "Some of our Schoolmates are Blind" and "Toward Tomorrow".

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AS A PART OF RECREATION PROGRAM

PART I

Alfred Eberhardt  
Head of Physical Education for Boys  
Missouri School for the Blind

In the Missouri State Teachers' Association Journal, there is an article on the subject of common sense in physical education. It starts out "Physical education teachers are confronted again and again with the problem of presenting a program diversified enough to meet the needs of each individual student". In past history, many instructors regimented their classes, expecting the same results from each student and this practice has no place in any physical education program. Boys and girls exhibit extreme differences in social, physical and emotional development, in height and weight, etc. These are factors which influence the performance of each individual student. Physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual and ethnical diversification should be taken into account by the instructor as he plans the curriculum, and this principle of meeting individual student needs applies directly to teaching the blind.

Among the kind of activities to be engaged in by blind youth are team games, because they provide opportunity for youth to win peer approval. Repetitious performance in activities is necessary to insure consistency in the development of acceptable actions on the part of blind students.

At the Missouri School for the Blind there is physical education for every boy and girl in the school from the fourth grade through the twelfth. We believe that temporary variations due to illness or disability, like a detached retina or organic heart conditions, which might be an excuse to prevent the individual from participating or permanent disabilities which affect the students' good health, are not sufficient for a permanent exclusion from physical education activities. Such variations are taken into account with modified activities.

The essentials of a physical fitness program are an annual medical checkup, proper diet, personal hygiene, adequate exercise, rest, sports and games and social recreation,



and these are provided for all students at the Missouri School. They pay off a thousand-fold and hopefully the good habits engendered here carry over into adult life.

Last year out of about 98 boys at the School participating in the U. S. Marines Physical Fitness Program, we passed 7 boys, which is a pretty good score, compared with public schools, with an enrollment of two or three thousand kids. If these schools pass 25 kids, they're doing good.

Sports are a part of our physical education recreation program and include wrestling, track and field. There are 11 schools for the blind in the mid-west which compete in sports through the North Central Association. We also compete with sighted teams in public schools. This is good preparation for blind youth to also be able to compete in college. We work out systems in competition with the coach giving directions according to the hours of the clock, and we have had phenomenal success, particularly in wrestling.

In track and field we also compete in meets and duels. In about 23 years of wrestling, the Missouri School has had 19 state champions, in competition with public schools and within our North Central Association Conference we've had 36 champions among schools for the blind.

We feel pretty good about our record. In closing I want to give you a little quiz. Which sport leads in highest percentage of people participating and which recreational activities are the most popular? Does anybody know? The answer is that swimming is first in numbers of persons participating. Statistics show that 77 million people swim in the United States. The runner-up is bowling with an estimated 33 million people enjoying this recreational activity. These also are two of the most popular recreational activities with the blind and are areas where blind persons can excel.

## PART II

Mrs. Elizabeth C. Kirn  
Acting Principal  
Missouri School for the Blind

As background information for what I am about to say I want you to know that we have a daily after-school recreation program for children in the first six grades, and for some



of the older children, depending on their class schedule. In addition, we have an evening and a weekend recreation program. Every Friday night we have a teen-town with many "outside" dates, most of whom are sighted. In addition some blind students take part in recreational activities in the community and especially in the churches. Here they need some basic orientation to the facilities and some verbal clues to explore with. You will find that once blind youth have been over the facility, whether it's the gym, the auditorium, the dressing room or the locker, they will need no further guide service - in fact they won't want or need it; they will be independent because they will have located their own clues to help them get about.

One of the special things blind children must learn to accept is that there may be some limitations to what they can or they can't do and to be realistic about what they can expect in the way of help from others. I think that the fact that handicapped persons may have certain limitations should be pointed out to the group in which they will be participating but not made "a big thing". I think the sighted persons should know exactly what the limitations are. Blind persons come in all sizes, shapes and with as many and varied desires, interests and abilities as sighted persons. The limitations if any will vary from activity to activity and from situation to situation. Modifications and accommodations will also vary from activity to activity and should be revised as you go along. It is good to remove modifications in so far as it is possible in recreational situations as the blind person becomes more secure and more able to function increasingly more independently and as an active participant in his or her relationship with sighted peers.

Some people have the stereotyped idea that blind people will break into pieces if they should fall down. Their skin heals just like yours and mine - if you skin a knee or get bumps and bruises we all must learn to "rub the bump" and go on and forget it. From the safety standpoint whether its swimming or bowling or wrestling or bicycling, teach basic skills and let the blind child cope with the situation, just as you do with the sighted child. If an accident occurs, get out the first-aid kit.

I work with the squad of cheer leaders at the Missouri School and I took them to a summer camp where ours was the only blind squad in the camp population of 250 sighted girls. At first the instructors said, "What will we do with the blind girls; how can we teach them the mounts?" I replied, "Teach them the mounts" and they

said, "Do you mean that they can do forward rolls and cart-wheels and stand on their heads?" I said, "If they can't, I'd like them to learn. They've got good arms and legs." We are proud of the spark plug which we won for the squad "with the most determination and spirit to succeed," and the spark plug is mounted and in the School's trophy case.

When different parties combine for a common purpose, profits are reaped by both as a result of cooperation between the two and this has been true of the relationship between the St. Louis Cleveland High School and the Missouri School for the Blind cheer leader squads. For 15 years the squads from both schools have gotten together to perfect their cheers and their routines. They've been jumping and yelling, straining their vocal cords, having a great time sharing new cheers and working together as a team. As a result, some of the girls have made lasting friendships. So you can see that when we act positively on the principle of integration, it really does work.



YOUTH PANEL

Randy Stinebaker, Chairman  
Sheri Stinebaker, Barbara Stear, Bob Leighninger, Sr.

- Randy: We have with us this afternoon, in addition to myself as chairman, Sheri Stinebaker and Barbara Stear who are high school seniors at Brentwood High School. Sheri and I are totally blind. In addition we have invited Bob Leighninger to participate and ask us some questions.
- Bob: Sheri, you are a blind member of the varsity volley ball team at Brentwood High, and Barbara is a classmate and also on the same team. Will you please tell us how you participate as a blind girl in volley ball?
- Sheri: I do the serving and there is a substitute for me in the net work. I just step back and off the court after I serve.
- Bob: Barbara, you are a member of this same team. Do you have to make any special accommodations to allow Sheri to participate?
- Barbara: The only thing we do differently is to rotate servers so Sheri's arm will not get sore. Sheri serves one time and then someone else serves the next time, back and forth, like that.
- Bob: You alternate, which is a deviation from standard procedure. Right? But that's the only concession that you have to make?
- Barbara: Yeah. Of course.
- Bob: I like the way you say that "of course," because this indicates that Sheri is accepted 100% as a participating member of the group. Sheri is that the way you feel about it? Do you feel that you are one of the team?
- Sheri: Yes. I too can make mistakes, especially in the inter-school games when we play at another school. If in serving I go out of bounds the penalty is against me, just as it would be with somebody else who is sighted.



Bob: Barbara, as far as the team is concerned, were there any problems in accepting Sheri or helping her to learn the procedures?

Barbara: No, it just took a little time. I think you can get used to having somebody serve, with an alternate at the net; it's just that there are two people instead of one.

Bob: We have been talking specifically about volley ball, which is just one form of recreation. Now let's bring into focus some of the other kinds of recreation that visually handicapped young people enjoy.

Randy: At Brentwood High School I was fortunate as a blind person to be allowed to try out for the School's wrestling team and I made it and participated for a couple of years.

When I was a senior, I thought I had the potential for the lead part in a particular dramatic production. There were other persons who had also tried out for the part, but I thought that I had done the best job. But the drama coach took me aside and said that I couldn't have the part because it required that the actor in this part perform from a wheel chair and he didn't think that a blind man could cope with the stage setting from a wheel chair. But he did say that if his first choice for the lead part did not work out, he might give me a second chance. And this is exactly what did happen.

When the coach approached me the second time, he suggested that we make the character in the lead part a blind man, so that my anticipated groping about from a wheel chair would come naturally to the character of the part. I wouldn't agree to do it that way and I soon found out that I had bitten off more than I could chew. I had not been realistic in considering my own ability to function from a wheel chair when the expectation was that I would be able to move with accuracy from place to place on the set, as if I could actually see what I was doing. This took hours and hours of practice and coaching, and everyone became frustrated.

I would not recommend a repeat of this kind of situation, which was actually brought about by my own personal ambition to succeed, in spite of my blindness. I was not able to master the circumstances as I had thought I could do and the whole experience convinced me to give up my ambition for a career in the theater. But just because one individual isn't cut out for a certain activity, regardless of whether he is blind or sighted, doesn't mean that someone else might not succeed where I had failed, or the other way around.

Bob: Now let me address myself to the audience. If you and your agency become enthused, about involving blind people in a particular agency program, do not expect that numbers of blind persons will come knocking at your door. It will not happen this way. But there may be a small number of blind persons living near your agency who will welcome the opportunity for an integrated recreational experience.

Some of these persons who may come to your agency will be blind people who have already made it on their own, who have had the ambition and the incentive and have found someone to teach them the kinds of basic recreation or sports skills so that they have the "know how" to participate in whatever it is they may want to do. Some may well be former students of the Missouri School, but they still are faced with closed doors and lack of opportunity to take part on an equal basis with sighted persons. No one wants to go where they may not be wanted or welcome but with a little encouragement from you and your agency, a whole new world of fun and friends may become a reality for them.

Randy: Remember that there is a difference between allowing someone to do something that they have not been able to do before and allowing them to be a part of something. It is not enough just to let a blind person participate, like in the swimming pool. If the blind person comes in as a solo individual and does not get involved in a socialization process, nothing really has been accomplished. The blind person who has not been accepted on a par, as a peer, who has not been able to share his thoughts, ideas, reactions to this new experience with others

in the integrated setting, or to give of himself as a friend to others, will continue to be isolated and probably will seek the fulfillment of his social and recreational needs in a segregated setting with other blind persons. There is nothing wrong with this. But it has been one of the basic tenet of this symposium that every person's life can be enriched by a variety of experiences, in a variety of settings, with a variety of persons, some of whom may be different than he is. The burning question is: will we or will we not be successful in St. Louis in accomplishing this goal for our blind youth?



LET'S FIND THE KIDS

Presentation by Robert Leighninger, Sr.

I hope you've enjoyed the demonstrations this afternoon as much as I have. Together we've seen a number of visually handicapped and totally blind kids participating in various recreation activities. We saw young women skating in the gymnasium and working on a trampoline; they were doing things which any other youngster might be expected to do. In the swimming pool, in addition to normal swimming and diving, we saw some of the blind young people swimming with snorkels and scuba diving. This of course is a skill that not every swimmer has accomplished and it is of special note that visually handicapped youngsters have become proficient in these activities.

In the bowling alley we saw strikes and spares that were being handled by young blind people. This is the same kind of performance you would see in an ordinary bowling alley with one exception: some of these youngsters were using a guard bowling rail, in other instances they didn't need it at all. And we saw cooking demonstrations. These young boys and girls have learned skills of homemaking that will be an asset when they have homes of their own. And didn't their cookies taste good! In the games area, we saw young people playing several different kinds of card games, and in the lounge we heard an excellent modern musical combo that some of us might like to engage for our next teenage bash. In the Arts & Crafts Department, we saw a variety of excellent work that is the kind you would see in any normal school situation.

We saw something special in the boys' gym; namely visually handicapped and blind young people participating in archery. These are young people who have been competing with sighted students from other high schools for the championship in this sport. The only difference as far as the blind are concerned is a radio placed behind the target, which helps to identify the area of the target which has been struck. They also may have a sighted guide who is permitted to stand behind them and indicate to them how they should move the bow a little bit to the right or left, or up or down. The rest of it they handle themselves. Of course the sighted guide tells them where the arrow actually struck, so they can learn from this where to try to place the next arrow.

In the playground area we saw bicycling. This was not tandem bicycling with a sighted rider but solo riding by severely visually impaired youngsters on their own; the only accommodation was a track with the grass on the infield and a foot-wide strip of cement that has ripples in it on the outfield. The differences in texture on either side of the bicycle track is the guide which tells the rider if she is on the track. There were also Scout activities, both Boy and Girl Scouts, demonstrating the same kind of activities that normal boys and girls participate in.

These demonstrations show that blind and visually handicapped kids can be taught recreation skills that prepare them to participate and compete with their sighted peers.

Now at the close of this Institute, the question arises as to "Where Are The Kids?" The first point I want to make is that your willingness to accept a visually handicapped or blind person into your on-going program doesn't mean that you are going to open the flood gates to a swarm of handicapped youngsters coming into your program. There just aren't that many who are blind or visually handicapped living in the St. Louis area. As a result of what you have learned today, we hope you no longer have reservations about serving these boys and girls in the kind of recreational program that your agency is sponsoring and that you will welcome them and will allow them to continue to participate so long as they hold up their end of the bargain: to cooperate and not become a burden to others because of their needs for special help or undue expectations. I am sure there are instances where there will be youngsters who will be too ambitious; on the other hand, as Ernie McMillan said, all we are asking for is the right for them to try, and either to succeed or fail, like all other kids. We want all blind and visually impaired youth to know that they could participate if they so desire.

We must face the fact that the greatest obstacle to participation is the matter of transportation. The sighted youngster can walk, take the bus, or ride his bicycle down a busy street; this is more difficult for the blind and visually impaired. This again is where the first step in making friends enters into the situation, namely "getting to know you." If you learn that there is a visually handicapped person within a reasonable distance of your facility, or program, the odds are 99 to 1 that there are some sighted kids living close by, who are in your agency program and who, with a little bit of effort on your part, might be persuaded



to be a guide or even provide the transportation to bring the visually handicapped kid to your facility. This, in a nutshell, is going to be the real heart of the problem; getting the youngster to and from your facility.

So, when we talk about the problem of "Where Are The Kids?" we've got the age-old problem of looking out just a little bit harder for the guy who needs a little bit of encouragement and a little bit of help to get there. He is not going to require a great deal of special expertise on the part of staff, or a great deal of individual training or added cost to what you are already doing. It is simply going to mean that you have come to grips with the fact that some of these youngsters can, and should have opportunity to participate and become integrated into your program. Now neither you nor I can make friends for anyone else. This is a matter of personal choice and all we can do is provide the opportunity so that they in turn can make their own friends. When they have this opportunity to meet and play with people who are just a little bit different, they are going to be happier, healthier young people and for the future we're going to have a happier, healthier community.







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